

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

HONORING THE DEDICATED
SERVICE OF LOUIS FINKEL

HON. BART GORDON

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 30, 2001

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bid farewell to Louis Finkel, my legislative director. Louis has been an invaluable member of my staff for almost six years. Replacing him will be a daunting task.

Louis has mastered every task and legislative priority I have assigned to him over the years. His hard work, loyalty and dedication have been instrumental in my work as a Congressman. I, along with every other member of my staff, will miss his contribution.

Louis' insight and analysis were key ingredients in every major legislative initiative with which I have been involved over the past six years. He has helped my efforts to finance a world class system of greenways and river trails in Middle Tennessee, expand and renovate the Stones River National Battlefield, restore environmentally sensitive wetlands, and begin a critically needed commuter rail system linking Nashville, Tennessee, with the surrounding suburban and rural populations.

Louis, like many bright and talented congressional staff members, is moving on to a career in public affairs. I'm confident his career there will be as successful as his career as a congressional aide. He undoubtedly will serve his clients as well as he has served me and my constituents in Middle Tennessee. I wish him well.

HONORING J&L VINEYARDS AS AG
BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 30, 2001

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize J&L Vineyards as Baker, Peterson & Franklin, Certified Public Accountants' Ag Business of the Year. J&L Vineyards is honored for its contributions to the ag industry and the Central San Joaquin Valley.

J&L Vineyards was selected by a committee of representatives of the AgFresno Advisory Board, National Ag Marketing Association, and the BP&F Ag Department. The family business is owned and operated by Don Laub and his daughter Debbie Jacobsen. Don's wife, Clara; son, David, daughter Diane Tavares; and Debbie's husband, Ray are also involved with the company. What began in the late 1930's as a 20-acre raisin farm has expanded to ten varieties of table, raisin, and wine grapes on 1,050 acres. J&L Vineyards has also grown beyond the Laub family to include ten full-time employees.

It is J&L Vineyards' efficiency and innovation that has earned it this recognition. These commitments can be seen by the business' integrated pest management, trellis design for table grapes, and higher yield with fewer inputs. Beyond agriculture and business, J&L Vineyards has exemplified a commitment to the community in which it has thrived. Family members have served on many boards including the Allied Grape Growers, California Foundation for Ag in the Classroom, California Women in Agriculture, and Greater Fresno Area Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge J&L Vineyards as the recipient of the 2001 Ag Business of the Year. I urge my colleagues to join me in honoring this company and wishing it many more years of continued success.

HONORING THE COBB COUNTY,
GEORGIA, CHAPTER OF KEEP
AMERICA BEAUTIFUL

HON. BOB BARR

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 30, 2001

Mr. BARR of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, since 1953 one organization in particular has been striving to bring communities together, by developing proactive projects that encourage responsibility for environment enhancement and encompass the values of community pride. Keep America Beautiful has become an international organization that seeks to empower our citizens, by implementing programs ranging from litter prevention to improving entire cities through training, education, and action.

Keep America Beautiful has almost 500 local, state, and international affiliates in 40 states, and is continuing to grow every day.

I stand today, to recognize Keep America Beautiful's chapter in Cobb County, Georgia, as the winner of this year's affiliate award in the category for population of more than 500,001.

Cobb County has excelled with programs such as on-line litter reporting service, the Litter Line, where residents can report illegal dumps, excessive trash, or graffiti. This initiates a faster clean-up response time, and provides a useful tracking device for area officials. Keep Cobb Beautiful also stood out with its Cobb Trees program in which over 90 trees were planted at five different sites, incorporating over 150 volunteers.

I ask my fellow Members of the House to join me in congratulating, Keep Cobb Beautiful's progress and hard work. May the example they have set for the state of Georgia and the country as a whole continue to spread.

RICK BLANKENSHIP

HON. CORRINE BROWN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 30, 2001

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, as a Floridian and a Member of Congress, I am thrilled to see that Mr. Blankenship is going to be the next Ambassador to the Commonwealth of the Bahamas. A community activist and advocate for children and local schools, I am certain he will serve our country honorably.

Mr. Blankenship's qualifications, which include over 20 years of experience in the private sector and years of work with Caribbean nations, make him a perfect fit for this position. His leadership in the area of international trade should benefit both countries, and his experience with air and port security will be a great asset at this critical time.

You know, the Bahamas is only 45 miles from the coast of Florida. My state has a special relationship with the island, as well as the Caribbean in general. And not only does the United States have close economic ties to the island, we also share ethnic and cultural ties, especially in education. And although many people outside the U.S. view us as "the ugly Americans" or "imperialists," I think that Mr. Blankenship could do a lot to improve our already friendly relations with the island. His concern for improving education and for children proves that he is a man that is concerned about people, and kids in particular. I know he will serve well as a link between our two countries.

I would like to close by once again congratulating Mr. Blankenship and wish him the best in his new position!

HONORING SOUTH SALT LAKE
MAYOR RANDY G. FITTS

HON. JIM MATHESON

OF UTAH

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 30, 2001

Mr. MATHESON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mayor Randy G. Fitts for his tireless efforts in representing the City of South Salt Lake.

Mayor Fitts served on the City Council of South Salt Lake from January 1978 to December 1989, and has been Mayor since 1992. He will retire on January 7, 2002, and his leadership and diligent work have been greatly appreciated.

Throughout his tenure as a public servant, Mayor Fitts focused on issues that would increase the quality of life for the residents of South Salt Lake.

Some of the projects he worked on include completion of the Jordan River Parkway, and

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

the renovation of the historic Columbus School, by transforming it into a senior citizens center, community center, recreation center, and library.

Mayor Fitts proved to be a fiscal conservative, as well, with South Salt Lake receiving high bond ratings and awards from the Government Finance Officer's Association. He also succeeded in preventing the implementation of property tax increases.

Always active in regional efforts, he has served on many public boards and councils along the Wasatch Front, dealing with important policy issues such as transportation and public safety.

He is currently Vice-Chair of the Wasatch Front Regional Council, and a member of the Criminal Justice Advisory Committee.

He has also been President of the Salt Lake Valley Conference of Mayors and President of the Salt Lake County Council of Governments.

Mayor Fitts showed great courage and leadership in providing early public support at a critical time for light rail. Fortunately, Mayor Fitts had the vision to realize the importance of bringing mass transit to the Salt Lake Valley.

This vision continued after the North-South line from Salt Lake City to Sandy was completed. Three light-rail stops are located in South Salt Lake, and Mayor Fitts has sought to integrate the light-rail system into the community in a way that is both socially and economically beneficial.

The 3300 South Transit-Oriented Redevelopment Project is a key component of this integration. This project seeks to utilize high-density housing, commercial offices, as well as retail and community services around the light-rail station.

This project will stimulate economic growth while at the same time encourage further use of mass transit, thereby helping to prevent further sprawl in the Salt Lake Valley.

This project received the 2001 Best Achievement in Planning for Transit Oriented Development from the Utah Quality Growth Commission, as part of South Salt Lake's Light Rail Corridor Master Plan.

In addition to his professional accomplishments, Mayor Fitts is well known for his sense of humor and wit. While he took his job seriously, he did not take himself too seriously. Which has always been the mark of an effective leader and public servant.

Therefore, I am proud to join with his many admirers in extending my highest praise and congratulations to Mayor Randy Fitts for his dedicated public service to the City of South Salt Lake. I extend my most heartfelt good wishes for all his future endeavors.

INTRODUCTION OF THE MEDICARE LABORATORY SERVICES ACCESS ACT OF 2001

HON. PHIL ENGLISH

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 30, 2001

Mr. ENGLISH. Mr. Speaker, today I will introduce the Medicare Laboratory Services Access Act of 2001. I am pleased to be joined

in introducing this important legislation by my colleague from Florida, Representative PETER DEUTSCH. Laboratory testing is an essential component of the health services we provide to our seniors. The health care needs of Medicare beneficiaries require them to have assured access to the full range of diagnostic laboratory tests. This measure would help ensure that the community laboratories that serve our nation's seniors have the resources necessary to continue to provide life-saving laboratory services. This legislation also seeks to remedy a financial burden imposed by new regulations requiring safe needles and related practices.

Laboratory tests facilitate early detection and accurate diagnoses which in turn result in more effective and less costly treatment. As a majority of the currently available tests to diagnose and treat diseases in the Medicare population involve taking and analyzing a specimen—or sample—from the beneficiary for laboratory analysis, health care providers rely on the accurate and timely collection of specimens to ensure adequate diagnosis and treatment. In fact, laboratory tests only account for 1.6% of the total Medicare budget but are used in 70% of medical decision-making. Yet, underpayment for specimen collection currently threatens the ability of community laboratories to continue to provide this much-needed service.

In 1984, Congress established a policy to provide for a "nominal fee" that was to cover the costs associated with collecting the sample on which a clinical diagnostic laboratory test was performed and paid for under the Medicare program. That fee was established 17 years ago at a rate of \$3.00 and has not been increased, even for inflationary factors since that time.

Our nation has seen amazing medical breakthroughs in technology while simultaneously the environments in which health care providers work has become more and more regulated. Further exacerbating the pressures on laboratories is that the available population of phlebotomists—the folks trained to draw blood—continues to shrink.

The combination of increasing costs, eroding reimbursement levels, fewer available health care workers with a growing population of Medicare beneficiaries threatens the Medicare program's ongoing ability to provide essential laboratory services, especially in rural areas and remote sites such as nursing homes. In January 2001, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) implemented new blood borne pathogen rules designed to improve worker safety. Yet, no additional funds have been provided to implement these requirements.

While I fully support new requirements for hospitals and other health-care facilities to identify and provide safer sharps systems as these policies help protect public health, we need to assist laboratories with these additional costs. This legislation would provide a modest increase in the specimen collection fee—an increase that would help offset the costs of these important new regulations and recognize inflationary increases over the past 17 years.

The Medicare Laboratory Services Access Act of 2001 increases the Medicare specimen

collection payment for FY 2002 to \$5.25—the amount the payment would be today had it been indexed annually to the CPI-U. For subsequent years, the bill allows for an annual adjustment based on the CPI-U.

I urge my colleagues to join us in the effort to bolster our community-based system of care for Medicare beneficiaries. I am pleased that my bill is supported by a number of national organizations, including the leading providers of clinical laboratory services. Groups endorsing this legislation include: American Association of Bioanalysts, the American Association for Clinical Chemists, the American Association of Occupational Health Nurses, the American Clinical Laboratory Association, the American Medical Technologists, the American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science, the American Society of Clinical Pathologists, the American Society for Microbiology, Becton Dickinson, and Quest Diagnostics. This important measure will help ensure Medicare beneficiaries access to the quality laboratory services they need and deserve.

HONORING THE GOOD DEED OF JUSTIN BRAMEL

HON. BART GORDON

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 30, 2001

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the good deed of Justin Bramel, a Murfreesboro, Tennessee, eighth-grade student who helped his school bus driver in her time of need.

Justin's bus driver, Sally Brown, became sick one recent afternoon after finishing her route. Fortunately for Mrs. Brown, Justin spotted the bus parked on the side of a road. He realized something was wrong and investigated the situation. He found Mrs. Brown to be very ill.

Justin calmly used the bus transceiver to advise school officials about the situation and direct emergency personnel to the location. Thanks to Justin's concern and levelheaded actions, Mrs. Brown is now recovering and should be back to work soon.

I want to salute Justin for his quick actions and his concern for his fellow human being. People like Justin epitomize the spirit of this nation and make it a better place to live.

COMMEMORATING 2001 DINNER OF CHAMPIONS

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 30, 2001

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 2001 Dinner of Champions being put on by the Central California Branch of the Mountain Valley California Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. The first of these annual events will honor racing legends Blackie Gejeian, Joe Boghosian, and the late Fred Gerhardt.